

Suffolk University Law School
Suffolk University
Commencement 2024
Student Speaker
Annabelle Hentz, JD '24

ANNABELLE HENTZ: Good evening everyone. Good evening to the deans, to the board of trustees, to the Suffolk faculty and staff.

It is my absolute honor to be a part of this day with all of the families, friends, and guests, present both physically, virtually, and in spirit, to celebrate the Suffolk Law Class of 2024. [APPLAUSE] Absolutely. To my fellow classmates, we did it. We did it. [APPLAUSE] And today we celebrate years, I take that back, over a decade's worth of achievements, academic excellence, strength, and resilience. For some, the first in their family to attend university and excel further by attending graduate school. [APPLAUSE] Absolutely, yes. For others, following in the footsteps of loved ones before them.

As someone who can count on more than one hand the amount of times I called my mom crying during law school, and I would like to imagine I was not alone in that, you all deserve an enormous shoutout. And a drink, probably. Over 25 years' worth of encouragement, support, and guidance from the people here with us today, from the bottom of our hearts, we thank you.

What does it mean to be a lawyer? During these past three years, every graduate here has taken Civil Procedure, Evidence, Legal

Practice Skills, Suffolk's legal writing program which, if you are unaware, has been ranked Top 10 in the Nation for 13 consecutive years [APPLAUSE] and countless other classes mandatory for both our curriculum as well as the B-A-R.

Yes, as I reflect back on my time at Suffolk, my idea of lawyering goes far beyond words which may be extracted from a book. My father showed me what it meant to be a lawyer. He passed away the summer before I started college. Above all else, I recall the attendance of countless of my father's clients to his service, a myriad of men, women, and families, showing up to their attorney's wake, to show their appreciation of and gratitude for my father's craft. To them, he was not just their lawyer but their confidant, their advocate, their supporter, their champion.

At that defining moment I knew being a lawyer exceeded any mental image, movie character, or tasteless sideways joke I had heard before. It became clear that the role of a lawyer held within it the profound capacity to not only influence individual lives and shape the course of destinies, but also bestowed upon one the profound privilege to initiate transformations that resonate throughout the broader fabric of society.

In a funny way, Suffolk Law has been our lawyer. Suffolk has been our confidant, allowing us to meet some of the most genuine, thoughtful, motivated people whom we have trusted with our fears, our ideas, our hopes, and our dreams. We have created lifelong friendships and will forever reminisce on temporary finals insanity and our first LPS memo and how—well it depends—for years to come.

Suffolk has been our advocate and supporter. Professors explaining where exactly we went wrong, deans helping us navigate our curriculum, how we could have done better, how to push ourselves, encouraging us to build connections and extend the bridge between the legal community and us students.

Suffolk has been our champion. Are you proud to learn that in 2024 Suffolk was named a Bloomberg Law Top 12 Innovator? A national leader in legal skills and experiential learning, Suffolk is the only law school ranked in the top 20% of skills specialty areas—that is clinics, trial advocacy, and dispute resolution,—for nine years running. [APPLAUSE]

From representing young people facing juvenile delinquency hearings from school to investigating wrongful convictions with the New England Innocence Project, our students are devoted to

aiding clients who would otherwise go unrepresented. Such a testament speaks volumes to the caliber of legal education fostered within Suffolk's walls.

Suffolk Law breeds champions, and it is without a doubt, it is without question that this graduating class will continue to preserve and prosper Suffolk's legacy.

To my fellow graduates again I say, congratulations. We did it. [APPLAUSE] One more time. We did it. [APPLAUSE] We overcame obstacles, and we adored Professor Glannon's sweater vests, and we have avoided stepping on the Suffolk crest in the lobby for years. And we did all of it together. It is our time, our time to be the advocates, our time to be the champions, our time to enact meaningful change within the legal realm, fostering an environment characterized by integrity, innovation, and ethical excellence.

Fellow graduates, it is our time to be lawyers. Congratulations Suffolk Law Class of 2024. Now let's pass that bar. [APPLAUSE]

[END]